

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 1, 2017

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Trump Administration is reportedly planning a 37 percent cut to the international affairs budget in Fiscal Year 2018. This massive reduction will undermine our diplomatic efforts and make the American people less safe. We urge you as our top diplomat to stop the White House from making these draconian and short-sighted cuts.

A month into your tenure, we hope you've had the opportunity to see firsthand the vital work our diplomats and development experts do to advance our national security. In your prior career, you no doubt learned that long-term goals and interests require sustained engagement and relationship building. For generations, there has been widespread recognition that our alliances, partnerships, and connections with countries and people around the world require the enduring, persistent, and tireless efforts and proper resourcing of the State Department and USAID. It's hard work to protect our country, strengthen ties with other nations, enhance stability across regions, and help build healthier more productive communities. It demands sustained, deep expertise, and an investment in resources.

It's worth it.

With instability and turmoil on the rise around the world, our international affairs efforts address the root causes of conflict and crisis. Our diplomats settle disputes over conference tables and in quiet conversation so that they don't need to be settled with bombs and bullets. Our development initiatives help countries lift themselves up, because areas mired in poverty often become hotbeds for instability and violence. This work also shows the world that the United States believes in opportunity, equality, and the rule of law for all people. As Ronald Reagan said, "America is a shining city upon a hill whose beacon light guides freedom-loving people everywhere." Those are the values we must continue to project across the world.

On February 27th, 120 retired three-star and four-star generals and flag officers from our country's armed forces sent a letter to House and Senate leaders urging them to "ensure that resources for the International Affairs Budget keep pace with the growing global threats and opportunities we face." We could not agree more.

If we gut our foreign affairs budget, we signal that another country—maybe one with different values and priorities—can take center stage when it comes to global leadership. And as far as preventing conflict and defusing crises, we're saying that we'll take our chances down the

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road. We're telling our sons and daughters that they may find themselves in harm's way tomorrow at tremendous cost, because we'd rather not pay pennies on the dollar today to make the world safer.

Now more than ever, we must make smart investments in diplomacy and development. Buying more weapons simply isn't enough to address the numerous challenges we face, from violent extremism, to nuclear proliferation, to climate change, to global health, to international illiteracy, or Vladimir Putin's aggressive efforts to undermine our democracy.

We urge you to make every effort to counter White House efforts to slash support for diplomacy and development.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Eliot L. Engel

Ante M. Lacey

[Signature]

Adam B. Schiff

Adam Smith

Frank Pallone Jr.

Nydia Velázquez

Joseph Crowley

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Madeline Waters

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Attachment: List of Signatories

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